January 2001

Re: Quality Analysis Tool for Windows 2000-2001, Version 1.0

We are pleased to announce the availability of a new software product, Quality Analysis Tool (QA Tool) for Windows 2000-2001, Version 1.0. This letter describes the functionality of QA Tool.

This new product was designed to conduct an in-depth analysis of applicant population using data from initial and paid on ISIR transactions. The analysis will provide data to help QA schools develop a targeted institutional verification program.

Included in this letter are the following:

- A list of the product enhancements,
- The results gathered from QA Tool benchmark testing, and
- A reminder to back up and optimize your QA Tool database.

You can download the software and the related user documentation via the Internet at the SFAdownload Web site: **http://www.SFAdownload.ed.gov**

Instructions for downloading QA Tool from the Web are located in the "Installation Instructions" chapter of the *Installation Guide for Quality Analysis Tool for Windows 2000-2001*.

If you do not have access to the Internet, or you have trouble opening the SFAdownload Web site to download the QA Tool software, call Title IV WAN Customer Service at **800/615-1189** to request diskettes.

Note: Some organizations restrict their users from downloading from FTP sites. If you have trouble downloading, try again later. If you are still unable to download, contact your technical support staff to ensure you have full FTP download rights.

If you have a Quality Assurance Program policy-related question, you can post an email on the Quality Assurance Program listserv: **qa-team@lists.air-dc.org**

The Performance and Accountability Improvement staff will promptly respond to your message. **Note:** Make sure you include your telephone number in your message.

For questions regarding QA Tool, such as installation issues, software problem resolution, software functionality, and technical assistance, you can call CPS Customer Service. You can reach them Monday through Friday, 7 a.m. – 7 p.m. (CT), at **800/330-5947**.

You may also e-mail inquiries, comments, or suggestions 24 hours a day to: CPS@NCS.COM

A representative will respond within 24 hours.

CPS *Customer* Service

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QA Tool, Version 1.0

The Department is pleased to announce the release of QA Tool, Version 1.0.

Instructions on how to download the software and install it on your own computers is located later in this letter as well as in the *Installation Guide for Quality Analysis Tool for Windows 2000-2001*.

If you have access to the Internet and you can't open the SFAdownload Web site, call your technical support staff to ensure you have full FTP download rights.

If you do not have access to the Internet, or you do have FTP download rights and still can't open the SFAdownload Web site, call CPS Customer Service to request diskettes.

Product Features

QA Tool is a new program that replaces the Quality Assurance Program for Windows. QA Tool is significantly different. We combined what we learned from the Quality Assurance Program for Windows with our users' comments and created a streamlined software product for analyzing 1999-2000 ISIR data.

The most important difference is that QA Tool allows you to import ISIR data from the 1999-2000 award year so that you can conduct your own institutional verification research by identifying repeatable patterns that are occurring in your student population, rather than analyzing awards. As a result, your verification process is improved and the financial aid process is easier for students.

The software focuses on *initial* and *paid on* ISIR data. You compare these two transactions side by side to see which fields were corrected. Using EFC ranges and increments of change, you can analyze a specific student population to determine which fields were corrected most often and how those changes affected the students' EFCs.

The following enhancements are included in QA Tool:

- **Data comparison.** QA Tool uses *initial* and *paid on* ISIR transactions to analyze your sample. It shows the differences between the data elements in the two transactions side by side for comparison. You can view all fields or a group of selected fields. Demographic data also displays.

- **Data entry and Multiple entry.** QA Tool has no manual entry or multiple entry function for student data; it uses only ISIR data that you import. Only the School Verification flag can be updated.

- **ENAS.** QA Tool does not support ENAS functions.

- **Import.** This function is particularly important because you import the ISIR data from your 1999-2000 Quality Assurance Program for Windows database (if you used Quality Assurance Program for Windows), your 1999-2000 EDExpress database (if you used EDExpress for Windows, Version 6.x), or an ASCII file in ISIR format. The record layout is similar to one used for Quality Assurance Program for Windows, Versions 4.x.

- **Print.** You can print a variety of new reports, as well as other useful information, such as record layouts for ISIR, Full Data, and User Data exports, a list of queries, and custom reports.

- **Tabs.** The software has only two tabs: Transaction Comparison and User Database.

Removed Functionality

Several functions have been removed from QA Tool as they are no longer applicable to the software. These include:

- **Readings.** QA Tool does not calculate readings.

- **Loans.** QA Tool does not support Pell, campus-based, or multiple loans.

- **Non-ISIR data.** QA Tool does not support non-ISIR data, such as awards, disbursements, resources, documents, or enrollment.

Full Data Export Function

Export is used to export all records from the QA Tool database to a file using the Full Data record layout. You can run the Full Data Export at any time. The Export function creates a file for an institution's own analysis. This is not the file to be submitted to ED. (The procedure and the file to be submitted to ED will be announced via the listserv).

QA Tool, Version 1.0 Print Benchmarking Results

We tested the following printers that are Windows NT 4.0, Windows 95, Windows 98, and Windows 2000* compatible:

HP LaserJet 3 si	HP LaserJet 4M Plus	HP LaserJet 5 si MX
HP LaserJet 4	HP LaserJet 4 si	HP LaserJet 8000N*
HP LaserJet 4000N	HP LaserJet 5M	
HP LaserJet 4M	HP LaserJet 5 si	

*No functional Windows 2000 driver was found for the HP LaserJet 8000N printer.

Reports

Following are the benchmarking results for QA Tool reports and lists.

- These reports were tested in Windows NT, Windows 95, Windows 98, and Windows 2000 on HP LaserJet 3 si, 4, 4000N, 4M, 4M Plus, 4 si, 5M, 5 si, 5 si MX, and 8000N printers.
- These tests were all completed on a Pentium II 266 with 64 MB RAM.
- The Average Time Elapsed column indicates the measurement of time starting when the user clicks OK in the QA Tool Print dialog box and when the operating system (Windows NT/95/98/2000) print dialog appears.
- The Benchmarking Volume is the number of records and approximate number of pages that were printed in the test.

Report	Operating System	Benchmarking Volume	Average Time Elapsed
Student Listing of EFC Change	NT 4.0	90 recs/2 pages	1 second
Student Listing of EFC Change	Windows 95	90 recs/2 pages	1 second
Student Listing of EFC Change	Windows 98	90 recs/2 pages	1 second
Student Listing of EFC Change	Windows 2000	90 recs/2 pages	1 second
Transaction Comparison Report	NT 4.0	5 recs/10 pages	1 second
Transaction Comparison Report	Windows 95	5 recs/10 pages	1 second
Transaction Comparison Report	Windows 98	5 recs/10 pages	1 second
Transaction Comparison Report	Windows 2000	5 recs/10 pages	1 second

Reminders

Back Up Your Database Weekly

You should back up your QA Tool database file, QAT01.mdb, regularly so you don't lose your data. We recommend that you back up your files at least weekly. You should also back up your data before and after you run utilities as a precautionary measure.

QA Tool does not include a backup utility. You must use your own backup software. You should test your backup software to verify its reliability to successfully restore your backups.

Optimize Your Database by Using Software Utilities

QA Tool contains utilities that allow you to optimize your database if you encounter problems. We recommend that you repair, compact, and verify your database once a week. Once all three are successful, back up the database (see section above).

Run the database utilities in the following order:

- Repair Database
- Compact Database
- Verify Database
- Repair Database
- Compact Database

For specific information regarding repair, compact, and verify, see the appropriate section below.

Run the Repair Database Utility

The repair database utility resolves inconsistencies (also called database corruption) in records storage. Events such as a power outage or a LAN failure can corrupt your database if it occurs while QA Tool updates your records.

QA Tool may not detect database corruption, so if your system behaves unpredictably (for example, you start getting database error messages, even something as simple as a missing flag on a record), use the repair database utility. Running this utility weekly helps to prevent database problems.

Warning: Before using this utility, be sure you have space on your hard drive that is at least equal to three times the current size of the database.

Improve Performance by Using the Compact Database Utility

The compact database utility improves the performance of QA Tool by optimizing the database (QAT01.MDB) file and reclaiming space on your computer's hard drive. As you add, modify, or delete records in QA Tool, the database file can become fragmented.

Running this utility weekly makes the database files smaller and improves system performance. It can also significantly reduce the size of your database. This does not mean that records were removed, only that the database is more compact.

Warning: Before using this utility, be sure you have hard drive space available at least equal to three times the current size of the database.

Prevent Problems by Using the Verify Database Utility

The verify database function checks for data relationship integrity in your database. If QA Tool crashes or abnormally halts processing, a record may be missing one of its associated records. Verify Database recreates the missing record.

Running this function weekly helps to prevent problems.

Warning: Before using this utility, be sure you have hard drive space available at least equal to three times the current size of the database.